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SECRET

NIE 42-69
17 July 1969

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 42-69

The Outlook in South Korea

Submitted by

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf

17 July 1969

Authenticated:

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, USIB

SECRET

No. 343

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the NSA.

Concurring:

Dr. Edward W. Proctor, for the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Vice Adm. Vernon L. Lowrance, Acting Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

Lt. Gen. Marshall S. Carter, the Director, National Security Agency

Abstaining:

Dr. Charles H. Reichardt, for the Assistant General Manager, Atomic Energy Commission and Mr. William C. Sullivan, the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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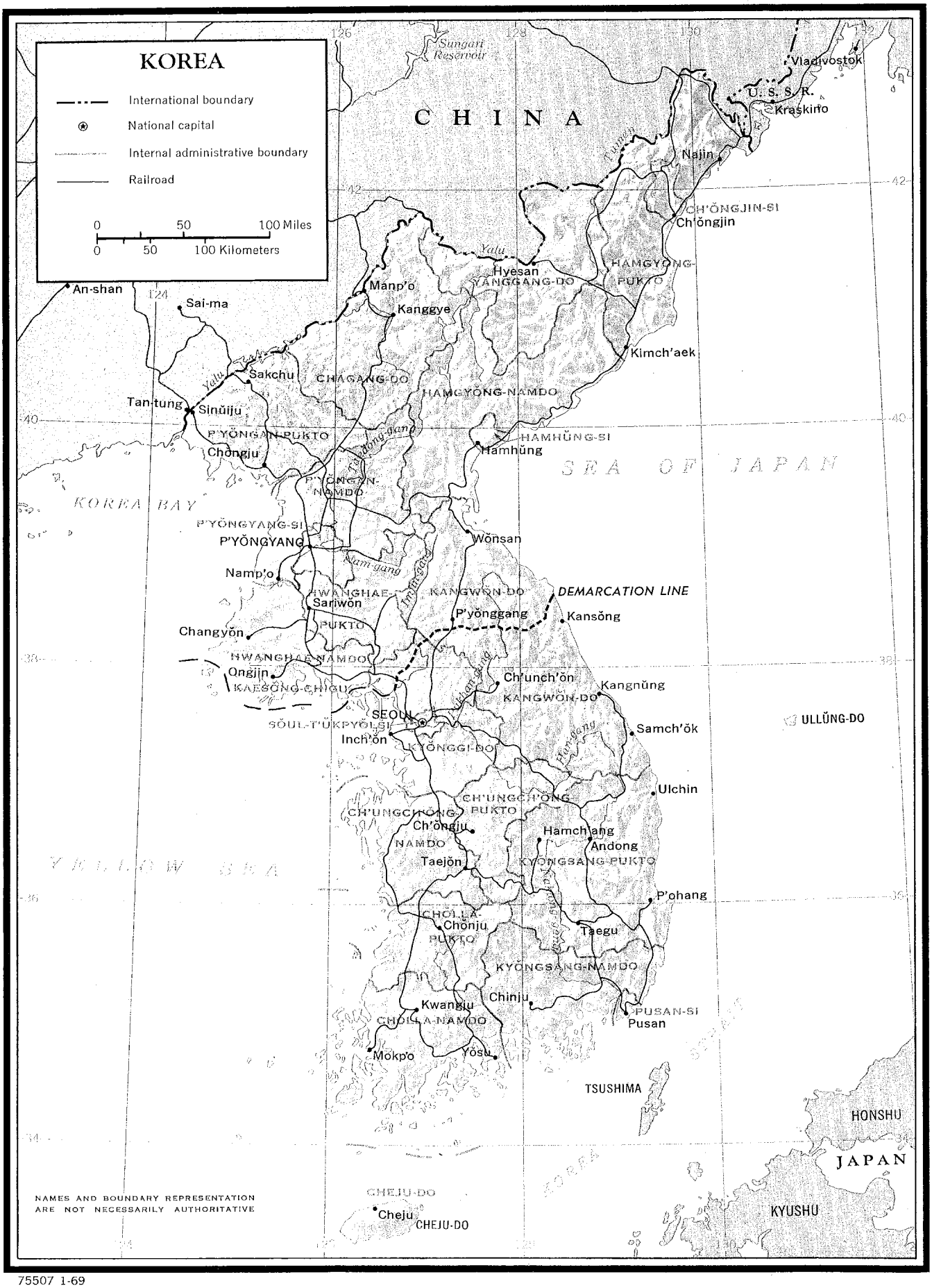
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THE OUTLOOK IN SOUTH KOREA

NOTE

This estimate assesses the outlook in South Korea with particular reference to the 1971 elections, the impact of likely North Korean actions on the ROK, and (at the request of the staff of the National Security Council) the effects of certain possible US courses of action.

CONCLUSIONS

A. Well in advance of the 1971 presidential election, political tensions in South Korea are acute and growing. Pak's political associates are pressing for a third term for him, but he has not yet made his decision. For him to run would require passage of a constitutional amendment and there is strong opposition to such a move even within some circles of the ruling party.

B. Passage of the amendment requires a two-thirds vote of the National Assembly followed by majority approval in a popular referendum. The first step is likely to be the most difficult. Pak's supporters are conducting an intensive campaign of pressures and inducements to line up the necessary National Assembly votes, but it may prove a close thing. If the amendment is passed by the Assembly, the government can probably arrange to secure a majority for it in the referendum, though at this stage too it might feel compelled to use heavy manipulation to assure success.

C. The most serious source of trouble for the regime is likely to come from the students—whose potential for disruption has been clearly demonstrated before and who largely oppose amending the Constitution. Student disorders can probably be handled by security forces, but serious and prolonged turmoil might seriously test the latter's reliability.

D. All things considered, however, Pak probably has at least an even chance of gaining a third term. But events could easily take other turns: if student or other resistance proves strong enough, Pak might decide not to run, especially since he could designate a successor candidate. Whoever runs as the ruling party's nominee would probably win, though in a completely free election an opposition victory is conceivable. Should it occur, the regime and the army would be tempted to retain control by force; their decision would depend heavily on Pak himself.

E. The contest in South Korea is essentially a struggle over political power rather than over particular domestic or foreign policies. The opposition leaders are as opposed to North Korea's pretensions as is the administration, and equally aware of the ROK's essential dependence for security on the US. The main political question is whether South Korea's fledgling constitutional democracy can undergo something like a free political contest, or whether the government's desire to keep control, and its fear that political turmoil would benefit North Korea, will lead it to heavy-handed suppression of its opponents.

F. During the coming years of political stress, North Korean military harassments of the ROK are not likely to be abandoned and may even be stepped up. These actions are unlikely to constitute a major threat to the ROK regime, and within limits a fear of the North works for unity in the South. Nonetheless, if Pyongyang is willing to take the risks, it may be able to create divisive strains among South Koreans (and between the ROK and the US) over how to deal with Communist tactics.

G. For the foreseeable future, the ROK will remain, in fact and in attitude, heavily dependent on the US for military support against North Korea. The impact of various possible US decisions concerning the level of such support is assessed in Section III.

DISCUSSION

I. THE 1971 ELECTIONS

1. Pak Chong-hui has been the dominant figure in Seoul since May 1961 when he and his military associates overthrew the parliamentary government that had governed since the fall of Syngman Rhee a year earlier. In the junta's view, the civilian politicians had not only failed to come to grips with the social and economic afflictions which had been the legacy of the Rhee era, but had permitted the development of a political environment in which pro-Communist elements had begun to thrive.

2. Though disposed to maintain authoritarian rule until the domestic situation had improved to their satisfaction, the military leadership was eventually persuaded by popular pressures (and US counsels) to re-establish constitutional government. In a reasonably honest election in October 1963, Pak won the newly-strengthened presidential office, securing a plurality against a badly divided opposition. Thereafter, carefully arranged legislative elections returned an overwhelming majority in the new National Assembly for the Democratic Republican Party (DRP), a party created by the junta to secure civilian support. In the May 1967 presidential election, also reasonably honest, Pak did better; even though the opposition was more unified than in 1963, he won a second term, with an unexpectedly large majority of the popular vote. Assembly elections, however, were again plagued by irregularities, and ultimately the regime felt compelled to concede a number of contested seats to the opposition. The DRP nevertheless retained its dominant position in the legislature.

The Third Term Issue

3. The 1971 presidential election has already begun to dominate political life in Seoul. The ROK Constitution, adopted during the period of junta rule, provides that no one shall serve more than two consecutive terms as President. But Pak's top political associates seem determined to secure a third term for him. The President himself has not yet made a decision about whether to press for it.

4. Pak is not yet certain of the political feasibility of a third term effort. His associates have begun to test the climate and to lay the groundwork for amendment of the Constitution, a process requiring a two-thirds vote of the 175 members of the Assembly, followed by approval in a national referendum by a majority of the eligible voters. The process is sufficiently cumbersome that proponents must act soon if it is to be completed before the actual electioneering period begins. (Additionally, if the third-term strategy should fail, the administration leadership will need time to select and to build up an alternate candidate.) Hence, the timetable would probably call for Assembly action late this year or early next, and the referendum by mid-1970.

5. In moving toward a third term, Pak and his associates will enjoy some important advantages. Foremost is the President himself. Although a rather

austere figure lacking charisma, Pak's conduct in office has brought him widespread public respect and acceptance. He has managed to project the image of a simple and hardworking man, devoted to the national interest and capable of decisive action, yet not wholly insensitive to the need for popular consensus on important measures.

6. Pak's cause is further strengthened by public appreciation of the outstanding achievements of his administration: prolonged political stability and substantial economic progress. While most informed South Koreans are skeptical of Pak's commitment to individual freedoms and democratic methods, there is general awareness of the threats to the nation's security and a tendency to accept the tight political control he has imposed, at least so long as it continues to be effective in maintaining public order and reasonably subtle in application. Similarly, though the benefits of recent economic progress have not been shared equally, there is widespread recognition, at least in urban areas, that living conditions are improving. Indeed, the rapid industrialization of recent years has brought reduced unemployment and higher real incomes for industrial labor, creating a new and substantial base of support for the regime, particularly in certain favored regions. Pak's success in halting the runaway inflation of the early 1960's has also become a major political asset of his administration.

7. The rural populace of South Korea generally accepts the established order in Seoul, although agricultural areas continue to lag behind the cities in terms of growth of real income and improved living standards. And there are other economic problems. South Korea's continued economic growth is vulnerable to external economic forces, particularly the US which is a major market for low cost ROK manufactures, a prime source of investment capital, and the chief source of economic aid. Thus, South Korea's industrial sector and, hence, the nation's capacity for sustained economic growth, is still fragile in certain respects. But so long as the US market remains open to expanding South Korean exports and there is no major US economic slowdown, South Korea's economic prospects are bright.

8. Among Pak's assets is virtually undisputed control of the entire South Korean governmental apparatus: the bureaucracy, the armed forces, the internal security organizations, and the majority party. The interests of these elements sometimes conflict, but these very conflicts make for a kind of balance of power advantageous to Pak, since the different interests are forced to compete with one another for his favor. The nation's big business community, which is heavily dependent on official favors for its continued growth and prosperity, may be counted another element in the administration camp.

9. Pak's tactics in creating and maintaining a balance among his subordinates have served also to bar possible contenders from effective challenges to his supremacy. The outstanding victim of this procedure is Kim Chong-pil, once nearly a full partner in the regime as chief of the powerful ROK Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and later as the organizer and leader of the DRP, through which he hoped to achieve national leadership after Pak's retirement. At present,

Kim has no official position and is lying low. We doubt that any other figures identified with the administration have a chance of gaining the DRP nomination against Pak's wishes.

The Obstacles

10. Despite his entrenched political position, Pak would face major obstacles in a third-term campaign. One problem lies within the government party itself. The DRP, once a fairly vigorous element on the national scene, is now, like other South Korean political groupings, characterized by factionalism and the pursuit of personal interests. Thus, while those DRP elements who see their careers closely linked to the continuation of the Pak administration tend to support a third term for him, there are some with ties to other personalities (particularly Kim Chong-pil) or with solid personal constituencies, who would prefer to see Pak step down or who are uncertain. Indeed, an unexpected show of anti-third term sentiment on the part of some DRP Assembly members earlier this year resulted in the expulsion from the party of a few "hard-core" supporters of Kim Chong-pil at presidential direction.

11. Pak's own political strategists consider that as many as 50 or 60 DRP Assemblymen—or about one-half of the party's Assembly delegation of 109—may be in the questionable category, with perhaps 10 to 20 of these strongly opposed to a third term. The storm signals emanating from the DRP have obliged the regime to become much more cautious in handling intra-party arrangements on the amendment issue. The latest plan is to persuade as many waverers as possible to commit themselves publicly by joining the other DRP members in signing a petition this summer which would place a third-term amendment before the National Assembly later this year. Even if the DRP were solidly behind the amendment, the mathematics of National Assembly representation provide little comfort to its proponents. The government needs 117 votes for a two-thirds majority; hence, to carry the amendment it will have to get some votes from the non-DRP membership, which includes 46 members of the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP), a coalition of conservative factions, and 20 others, mostly former members of the DRP. The government will seek to attract the needed non-DRP votes by offering various inducements to individual members.

12. The NDP leadership has already assumed direction of a movement to block amendment of the Constitution and it seems unlikely that more than a few NDP Assemblymen can be brought to support the amendment. The NDP realizes that its chances of winning the presidency in 1971 will be better if Pak is not the candidate of the DRP, and that his departure would weaken the DRP Assembly ticket as well. The NDP probably also believes that Pak's withdrawal and the likely subsequent struggle for the succession among his supporters would weaken the entire DRP political coalition, opening the way for a political alignment more favorable to the NDP.

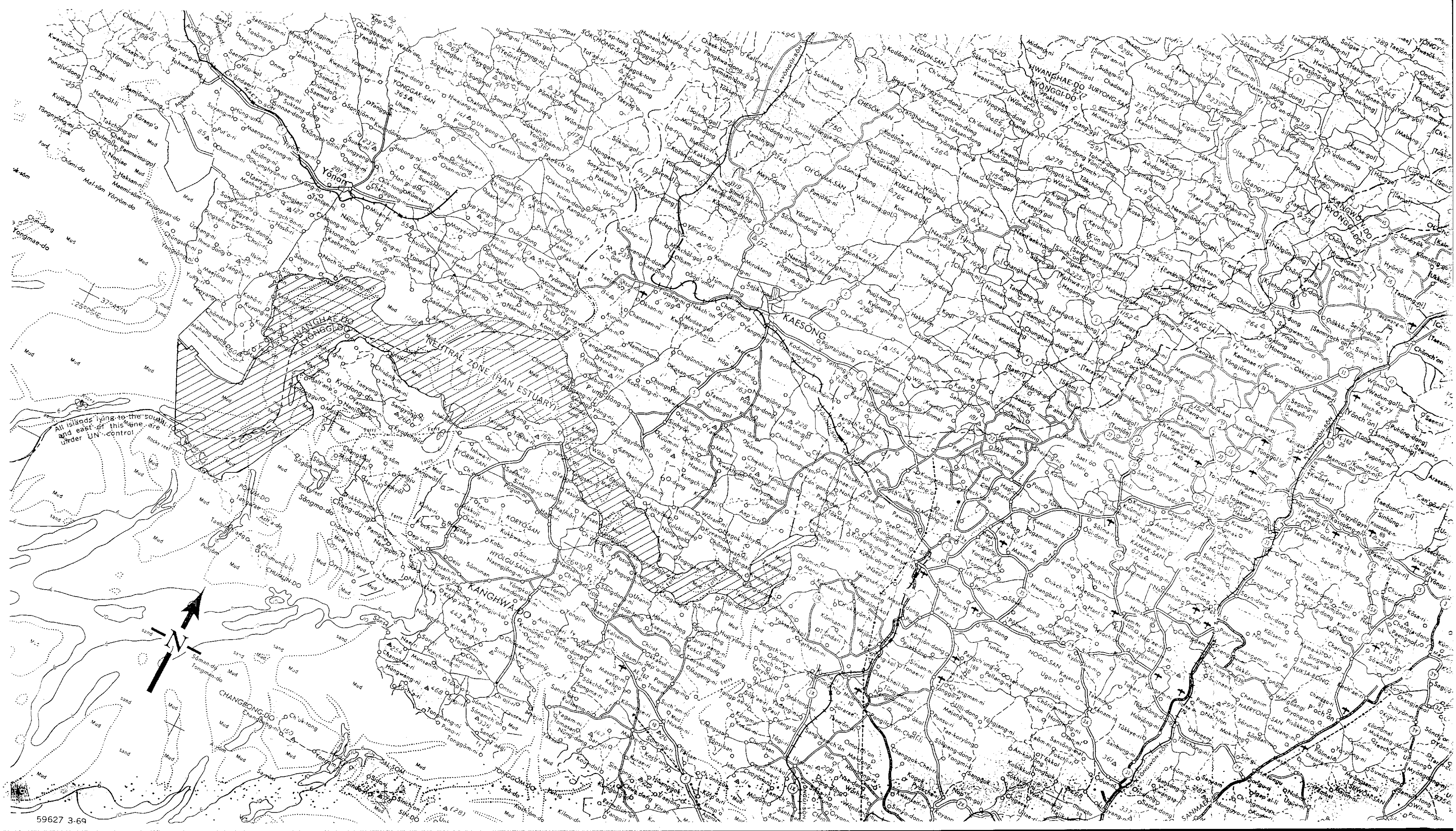
13. The NDP will focus its anti-amendment campaign on the cities, particularly Seoul, where its strength has always been concentrated. The NDP itself

would not be a formidable barrier to administration plans; with weak leadership, lackluster programs, and poor financing, it has never been a vital force for change in South Korea. But adhering to well-established patterns of political action, there will be a major NDP effort to stir the intellectual community—editors, writers, college administrators, professors, and religious leaders—into speaking out against the amendment in hope thereby of engaging the interest and participation of the students and their network of campus organizations. Students are a volatile and unpredictable force on the ROK political scene. Like students elsewhere, they tend to view political issues as moral questions; and while most of them do not dislike President Pak personally, there is considerable distaste for those around him, who are seen as utterly corrupt and desirous only of safeguarding their own profitable fiefdoms. There is also great concern in the colleges, and in other politically aware circles, that amendment of the Constitution would in effect deprive the people of the first real test of their ability to change government by legal means.

14. The views of intellectuals and students carry relatively great weight in the Confucianist Korean society. Student demonstrations or the threat of demonstrations have played a major role in the South Korean political process almost every year since the overthrow of Rhee in April 1960. But student political activism has clearly been declining in recent years, in part because of intensified surveillance of their activities by ROK security agencies and the government's use of intimidation and rewards to keep student leaders under control. Moreover, tight governmental control of the press and other media serves to deprive student dissidents and others of outside publicity, understanding, and support for their political activities. In any case, substantial support from the urban community for student political efforts appears unlikely to develop; workers and shopkeepers have usually avoided participation in South Korean political demonstrations.

15. In these circumstances, it appears unlikely that demonstrations on the amendment issue will grow to the massive proportions of 1960 or that outside elements will be attracted into actual participation on any major scale. The situation is difficult to forecast, however. The third-term issue has already aroused strong emotional reactions and these have not been confined to the students. Moreover, the course of events in the streets may be determined more by chance than by plan; for example, the death of a few student demonstrators as a result of police action could trigger a response sufficient to involve tens of thousands of students and bystanders.

16. In South Korea, the role of the military has been decisive in times of political turmoil; the two major changes of political power—in 1960 and 1961—were supported or engineered by the military. Acutely conscious of this, over the years Pak has installed men personally loyal to him at all senior command levels and retired those with other allegiances. But this does not mean that the military is solidly behind a third term for Pak. Opposition to it is particularly noticeable among the second echelon of leadership, the junior generals and field-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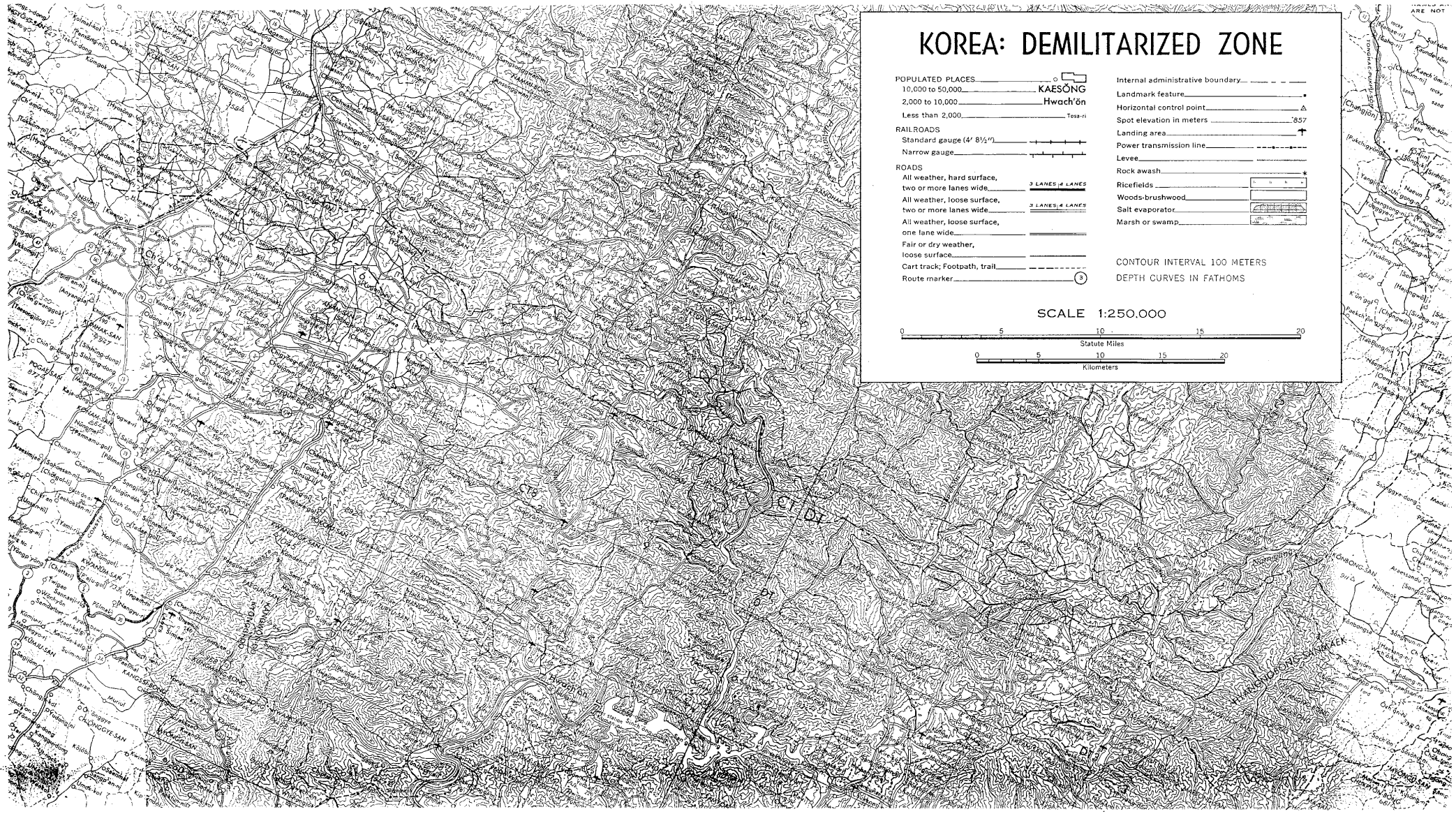
KOREA: DEMILITARIZED ZONE
POPULATED PLACES
10,000 to 50,000 KAESŎNG
2,000 to 10,000 Hwach'ŏn
Less than 2,000 Tosa-ri
RAILROADS
Standard gauge (4′ 8½″)
Narrow gauge
ROADS
All weather, hard surface, two or more lanes wide
All weather, loose surface, two or more lanes wide
All weather, loose surface, one lane wide
Fair or dry weather, loose surface
Cart track; Footpath, trail
Route marker
Internal administrative boundary
Landmark feature
Horizontal control point
Spot elevation in meters
Landing area
Power transmission line
Levee
Rock awash
Ricefields
Woods-brushwood
Salt evaporator
Marsh or swamp
CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 METERS
DEPTH CURVES IN FATHOMS
SCALE 1:250.000
Statute Miles
Kilometers

grade officers who regard themselves as better-trained and more qualified for leadership than the senior commanders, whom they see as overinvolved in political matters and blocking their promotions as well. We have insufficient information to characterize the views at lower levels of the officer corps, but there is evidence of disbelief in the regime's argument that Pak's departure would somehow embolden the North Koreans. Moreover, many young officers, like the university students, are critical of the patterns of corruption which they claim to see at high government and military levels. In sum, there appears to be little positive support for a third term in the services except at top levels. The army's new Security Command (formerly the CIC) has been ordered to monitor military attitudes on the issue and to stimulate support for Pak in the officer corps.

The Election Outlook

17. The progression of events on the ROK political scene over the next two years or so will depend heavily on the decisions of Pak himself. Whether or not he does indeed desire another term in office, his associates will probably persist in their present efforts to amend the constitution. But seriously adverse reaction might lead Pak to terminate the campaign. He is a man of integrity and a sincere patriot with a strong desire to retain a respected place in Korean history. He would probably change course, albeit reluctantly, if he came to believe that his ambitions were opposed by most of his countrymen or that his campaign was leading the nation into a period of serious instability from which the Communists could profit. In making his decision, he would not be especially impressed by the attitudes and actions of opposition or other politicians, or by students who appeared to be manipulated by them; he places little credence in the sincerity or patriotism of politicians. He would be more impressed by expressions of concern from close personal associates and senior army generals, particularly if he believed that their views had official US support.

18. It is, of course, possible that vehement public opposition would only reinforce Pak's determination to stay in office. He tends to react bitterly to personal attacks and to respond directly, sometimes without adequate consideration of the consequences. There is little doubt that the nation's vast internal security apparatus coupled with security elements of the army could forcibly suppress any purely civilian dissent. They would almost certainly respond to the President's orders, at least initially. But in the unlikely event that the situation were to degenerate into something resembling the 1960 anti-Rhee riots, it is questionable whether ROK police or military forces would continue to accept orders to shoot their countrymen on behalf of Pak's ambitions. Of equal importance, we believe that Pak, for all his authoritarian leanings, would be reluctant to force such a solution. In sum, if public pressures rose to unacceptable proportions, we think Pak would abandon the third-term campaign.[1]

[1] One alternative would be to seek an amendment extending the term of the presidency to six years. We believe that response to such a proposal would be only slightly less adverse than to the full third-term amendment.

19. If the Pak forces continue to push for a third-term amendment, their first difficult task will be to secure a two-thirds vote in the National Assembly. We believe that chances are better than even that a combination of inducements and intimidation will bring all but a few DRP Assemblymen to support the amendment, together with enough legislators outside the DRP to achieve the required 117 votes. If, however, this estimate is wrong and administration forces lose in the Assembly—or it becomes quite apparent in advance of the vote that they would lose—it is probable that the third-term campaign would be terminated.

20. If the amendment passes the Assembly, it is unlikely that the regime, with all the facilities at its command, would lose the referendum. Even an uncontrolled referendum would probably result in a favorable outcome for Pak, though it would undoubtedly reveal a substantial loss of support for him among politically aware voters. Once nominated for re-election by the DRP, we believe that Pak would probably win the presidency. The administration record is a good one; the political organization of the "ins" is much more effective than that of the "outs"; there is no outstanding opposition figure; and, among the rural populace at least, the known is likely to be preferred to the unknown.

21. If Pak emerges the winner in 1971 without having resorted to unusually heavy-handed methods, the prospect for South Korean political stability during his third term (1971-1975) would be good. But if his election had been attended by highly questionable tactics or severely suppressive actions, there would be serious disillusionment among the populace over prospects for democratic growth, disappointment that the US had not somehow used its influence to right the situation, and, ultimately, increased receptivity to leftist and other extremist appeals. This is not to say that North Korea would suddenly gain the covert support of many South Koreans, but rather that political dissidence and illegal political activity aiming toward overthrow of the Pak regime would increase in scope and intensity. Suppression of such activities, moreover, would inevitably lead the regime into still greater reliance on authoritarian measures.

22. *Alternative Possibilities.* If Pak should decide not to run for a third term, he would have the dominant voice in selecting an alternate candidate for the administration forces. There are essentially two possibilities: the selection of one of the present inner circle of the administration, civilian or military, who would almost certainly be heavily dependent on and responsive to Pak; or the encouragement of Kim Chong-pil's candidacy.

23. An administration candidate running with strong support from Pak would have a good chance of holding the DRP coalition together. The DRP is still the only reasonably effective grass roots political organization in South Korea and its candidate would start his campaign with a considerable edge over the opposition. He would also benefit by basing his appeal on continuation of the Pak record of political stability and economic progress. But an administration candidate would also be vulnerable to allegations that he was merely a puppet, nominated to screen Pak's continued rule.

24. Kim Chong-pil's candidacy would be less vulnerable to such charges because he is respected for a degree of political independence, particularly among South Korean youth. But Kim still carries the stigma of his past association with the repressive methods of the ROK CIA, and there are memories of his financial peculations. Moreover, Pak's support for his candidacy might be only lukewarm. Though Pak respects him and they are in substantial agreement on the nation's broad objectives, Pak is aware that he could not control Kim if the latter were nominated. Pak is also concerned about Kim's unpopularity with most top-ranking ROK military leaders and with most of the DRP leadership. Thus, Kim's nomination would risk a major split in administration forces on the eve of national elections. It appears unlikely, at this time, that Kim would seek the nomination if Pak endorsed another candidate.

25. If Pak does not run, there is some chance that an opposition candidate will win the Presidency. Under Kim or any other government candidate, the regime's political mechanism would be less unified than it would behind Pak's candidacy. Paradoxically, an opposition victory in 1971 might be even more unsettling to the ROK political scene than the election of Pak under dubious circumstances. Almost at once, the question of a military coup by Pak's generals would arise. Although the new President would undoubtedly hasten to assure army leaders of his good will and understanding of their problems, if he were viewed by them as objectionable in some way, a coup on behalf of Pak or some other top military figure might be attempted. Much would depend on Pak's personal attitude. If he and his associates accepted defeat with good grace, the military would probably concur. At this point in South Korean history, a military coup would be repugnant not only to most of the civilian populace but to many younger military officers as well. It would gravely weaken popular support for the central government and probably lead to serious civil disorder.

26. An opposition victory would lead inevitably to a major realignment of political forces in South Korea. (Indeed, Pak's decision to step down, of itself, might lead to permanent splits in the DRP and new political coalitions contesting the elections.) In this sense, an opposition victory would be somewhat unsettling to the nation. On the other hand, the failure during the Pak years to develop a viable party system might be remedied to some extent as a result of such an upheaval, thereby improving longer range political prospects in South Korea. In the economic sphere, after a necessary readjustment period, it seems likely that relatively little would change. The bureaucracy which has planned and developed the nation's economy has been largely institutionalized and would probably remain in charge despite shifts at Cabinet and sub-Cabinet levels; and US economic advice, which is generally heeded by the South Koreans, would continue to be accorded great weight. Indeed, the conservative opposition is even more closely attuned to the US alliance than is the Pak leadership and might be easier for the US to deal with on some issues.

27. The question of US preferences will inevitably arise at various stages of the political process between now and 1971. US influence is still substantial

in both government and opposition circles in the ROK, and indeed most of the Korean public tends to exaggerate its extent. Pak's growing self-confidence after eight years of office has made him less responsive to US advice than previously. Nonetheless, if Pak came to believe that the US opposed his candidacy, he would regard it as a strong—though perhaps not decisive—reason to withdraw. On the other hand, if the US clearly avoided any preference, or remained silent during political turmoil surrounding the third-term issue, this would be widely interpreted in Korea (and by Pak) as indication of support for Pak, or at least acquiescence in the campaign.

II. NORTH KOREA'S IMPACT

28. One of the reasons advanced for a third term for Pak is concern over North Korea's commitment to a campaign of violence against the South. This concern is shared by many South Koreans who believe that Communist premier Kim Il-song counts on the political unrest likely to attend the 1971 elections as an opportunity which the North can exploit.

29. The leaders in Pyongyang will be alert to any opportunities that arise, but may be in something of a dilemma as to the tactics to be employed against the South at this juncture. On the one hand, to continue or to step up their campaign of DMZ harassment and occasional behind-the-lines terrorism would lend credence to the contention of the Pak forces that his continued leadership is essential to the nation's security. It might even provide an excuse for Pak to claim emergency powers and suspend elections, and to do so without much dissent. We doubt that Pyongyang wants to help Pak in this way. On the other hand, to forego violence would run counter to other Communist objectives of recent years: to divert ROK leaders and resources from more productive tasks; to undermine confidence in the government and cause strains in its alliance with the US; and to give credence to Pyongyang's claims of serious political unrest and revolutionary potential in the South. Finally, abandonment of violent tactics would damage Kim Il-song's reputation as a tough-minded revolutionary leader.

30. We believe that North Korea will not abandon harassment of the South during the pre-election period, though the campaign will probably fluctuate in tactics and intensity. We also continue to believe that, under present circumstances, North Korea is unlikely deliberately to initiate war against the ROK.[2] The important question, then, is whether the Communist might step up levels of violence to any substantial degree and what the effects of their actions would be on South Korea.

31. North Korean belligerency would have to assume much higher levels before it constituted any direct threat to South Korea. Indeed, up to a point, North Korean harassments serve to strengthen unity in the South and to solidify popular sentiment behind Pak's regime. Nonetheless, violent and provocative tactics by

[2] SNIE 14.2-69, "Confrontation in Korea," dated 30 January 1969, SECRET, contains a full discussion of the intentions and capabilities of the opposing sides.

the Communists do confront the ROK Government with major political as well as security problems, and if the Communist campaign should intensify, so would these problems. Thus, North Korea might be tempted, particularly during a period of domestic turmoil in the South, to go well beyond incidents along the DMZ and sporadic terrorist operations in the countryside. It might stage a raid across the line with fairly large forces, carry out a commando attack on a coastal installation, or a major guerrilla assault on a sizable town or industrial plant.

32. Faced with actions of this sort, Pak's government would almost certainly feel compelled to retaliate, both because it believes that failure to respond would simply encourage Pyongyang in its aggressive course and because Pak's supporters and rivals in the ROK would interpret passivity as weakness, an indication that he was not, after all, an effective defender of the nation. Yet a decision about whether to retaliate is not a simple matter for Pak. If he took action without US concurrence, he would risk serious strains in relations with the US. And if he sought and failed to get concurrence and pursued a policy of restraint, he would risk great loss of face among his countrymen. In short, the North Korean campaign has virtually no chance of toppling the ROK Government, but if Pyongyang is willing to take the risks, it may be able to create divisive strains among South Koreans as well as between the ROK and the US.

III. THE US ROLE AND SOME CONTINGENCIES [3]

33. In SNIE 14.2-69, we estimated that, "Pyongyang almost certainly believes that the presence of US forces in South Korea, quite aside from US public commitments, would virtually assure US participation in any new war." The following paragraphs assess the effect of the withdrawal of one or both of the US ground combat divisions on: (a) North Korean policies; and (b) the ROK itself.

34. *Effect on North Korea.* The circumstances and timing of any such US move would be all-important in North Korean calculations. A withdrawal of both US ground combat divisions over the next few years would almost certainly lead North Korea to doubt US willingness to get involved in another Korean War. This would be particularly true if the move took place in the context of a US withdrawal from Vietnam under conditions deemed favorable to the Communists. North Korean belief that the US commitment to the ROK was weakening would persist no matter what the US said and despite the continued presence of US logistical and air defense personnel in South Korea.

35. On the other hand, we believe that a phased withdrawal of as much as one division could be accomplished over the next few years without giving the wrong signal to Pyongyang, at least so long as a reasonably large US contingent remained on the DMZ or near it. In our view, it is essentially the involvement of

[3] This section of the estimate is a response to questions posed by the staff of the National Security Council.

a US ground combat force in the defense of South Korea that weighs most heavily in North Korean calculations. Pyongyang would almost certainly assume that, once engaged in battle, US forces would be reinforced as necessary.

36. This is not to say that partial US troop withdrawals would have no impact on the North-South confrontation or on North Korean attitudes. But the net effect might be mixed. On the one hand, reduction of US forces in the ROK—particularly in view of past US restraint in the face of severe North Korean provocation—might lead Pyongyang to believe that its military and paramilitary harassments along the DMZ and in rear areas of the South could be stepped up without great risk. On the other hand, the Communists might view the US withdrawals as removing some measure of restraint on the ROK, making its response to any North Korean provocations more unpredictable.

37. North Korean calculations about any reduction in US forces in South Korea would also be affected by developments concerning US bases in Japan and Okinawa, since these facilities relate directly to US military capabilities in the Korean peninsula. Heavy US military retrenchment in Japan and Okinawa would be seen as new constraints upon US capacity to support the ROK; while limited US military reductions in Japan and Okinawa, especially if coupled with the return of large ROK combat contingents from Vietnam, would make the North Koreans cautious in evaluating the significance of any US troop cuts in South Korea.

38. We do not believe that US troop reductions, of whatever proportion, would encourage China or the USSR to sponsor or support another North Korean invasion of the South. The limits on the influence of both Moscow and Peking over the Kim Il-song regime are such that both would be reluctant to offer open-ended commitments carrying the danger—however fractionally diminished—of direct involvement in war with the US.

39. Regardless of the extent of any US troop reduction, an extensive program of re-equipment and reorganization of the ROK Armed Forces would lead Pyongyang to press Moscow and Peking to further strengthen North Korean forces. We believe that Moscow would comply with North Korean requests—though with some reluctance—and would strive to match the US input of materiel in type and approximate quantity. The USSR probably would, by public pronouncements and propaganda, urge the US to halt the developing arms race lest one Korean side or the other be tempted to attack. The Chinese would probably do what they could to help the North Koreans, in hope of regaining a position of some influence in Pyongyang, but they could hardly provide, at any time soon, the variety of sophisticated air and naval equipment which the Soviets could supply and which would be of most interest to the North Koreans. It is virtually certain that neither the USSR nor Communist China would furnish nuclear weapons to North Korea.

40. *Effect on South Korea.* The timing and circumstances of any US troop withdrawal would critically affect ROK reactions just as they would those of the North. So long as the outcome of the Vietnamese War and the issue of US bases

on Okinawa remain uncertain, almost any reduction would cause apprehension in the ROK. The withdrawal of both divisions within the next few years would shake South Korean confidence badly. This would be true even if the ROK's own combat divisions were in the process of returning from Vietnam. Withdrawals of this magnitude and in these circumstances would appear to the ROK as a substantial weakening of the US commitment to its defense. As partial reinsurance, the ROK Government would press strongly for a new US commitment, with provisions no less binding than apply in the case of NATO. It would also make new and urgent demands on the US for compensatory "modernization" of ROK forces, including the provision of strong air and naval defense arms.

41. In the case of the withdrawal of one US division, ROK fears would be tempered by an awareness that the other remained. There would inevitably be demands for treaty revision and compensating strengthening of ROK forces, and for reassurances that the second US division would remain. But we would foresee no major intensification of ROK fears of Communist attack nor any growth in political instability.

42. Whether reduction of US forces involved one or two divisions, the South Koreans would be concerned over the prospective loss of foreign exchange—on the order of $50 million annually for each of the two US combat divisions—and would press for compensatory financial aid.

43. *ROK Force Reductions.* The domestic political uncertainties of the next two years will make the Pak government particularly resistant to the idea of reducing ROK forces during this period—even in connection with a program of modernization. Politically, it would be concerned about discontent among high officers and unemployment among discharged officers and enlisted men. It would feel vulnerable to charges that South Korean security was being sacrificed in the interests of reducing US expenditures. South Koreans generally take great comfort from the numerical superiority of their army to that of the North and do not want to lose this advantage. Seoul probably believes that, with sufficient additional modern equipment, it could undertake a considerable force reduction without sacrificing an adequate ground defense against the North. On the other hand, defense against the threat of infiltration calls for substantial numbers of troops, and no amount of modernization or reorganization can obviate that need. Of course, any substantial reduction in US forces in South Korea during this period would make the ROK even less receptive to reducing the size of its own forces.

44. After the 1971 elections, if political activity subsides, Seoul would probably be more willing to consider some reduction in the ROK ground forces, though it would seek compensatory programs for upgrading the capabilities of the armed forces as a whole. This would appeal to Seoul as enabling it to reduce dependence on the US, to adopt a more self-confident attitude toward the North, and to respond more independently and forcefully to North Korean provocations. In these circumstances, we believe that the ROK leaders could be brought to accept a reduction on the order of two or three of their present 20 or so army and marine

divisions. It should be emphasized, however, that what they would consider an acceptable minimum in the post-1971 period would depend heavily on the actions of North Korea and its allies, as well as on ROK readings of the willingness and capacity of the US to provide ground combat assistance in the event of another war in the peninsula.

45. *The UN Role.* Almost any substantial US troop withdrawal would raise some questions about the status of the US-directed United Nations Command (UNC), which has operational control over virtually all ROK and US military forces in South Korea. With a reduced US component, Seoul would probably press for an increased voice in the UNC structure. The South Koreans would not, however, seek the top post. They almost certainly believe that a US officer in command helps guarantee US military participation in the event of war. They also accept the principle that their heavy reliance on US logistical support must give the US a strong voice in ROK military affairs regardless of other legal arrangements. And they probably realize, too, that the assumption of command by a Korean could call into question the entire structure of the Korean armistice—never signed by Seoul—and the UN's interest in its continued enforcement. They value the political advantages accruing from their relationship with the UN, are quite aware that this relationship is increasingly viewed in much of the world as an obsolete legal fiction, and they do not want to jeopardize it. Moreover, they appreciate that any change in the arrangement might cause major immediate military problems; most important, under a longstanding US-Japanese agreement, bases in Japan are, at least in theory, automatically available to UN forces in the event of renewed Korean hostilities without the "prior consultation" requirement applicable to US forces.[4]

46. The UN role in Korea is, of course, persistently condemned by Pyongyang. It is possible, therefore, that the Communists would exploit a major US troop reduction to intensify their longstanding campaign for termination of the special UN role in the Korean situation. The North Koreans would work to spread fears of ROK adventurism and possible war among the Korean War allies, and such tactics might be effective in leading some of them to withdraw their token support from the UNC. Communist agitation among General Assembly members would also strike some responsive chords. If determined to undermine the armistice agreement, Pyongyang might use a US withdrawal from DMZ positions in the Panmunjom "corridor" as a pretext for suspending or terminating operations of the Military Armistice Commission. But the Communists, of course, can do this whenever they decide that the political and propaganda purposes served by the meetings at Panmunjom are no longer profitable to them.

[4] If the UNC was dissolved *and* there was a significant reduction in the US military presence, the ROK leaders would find it considerably more difficult to accept a US top commander.

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